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Puppies & Kittens

If you are one of the many people who welcomed a new puppy or kitten to your family over the holiday season, then read on. This is an exciting time, and we want to start your new bundle of joy off the right way and help them be happy, healthy and well-behaved dogs and cats. The first couple weeks with a new pet can be challenging, but hang in there and your efforts will be rewarded.

Schedule with your Veterinarian

Once your new puppy or kitten is settled into their new home, you will want to make an appointment with your veterinarian. If you have other pets in the household, you should wait to introduce them until your veterinarian gives you the go ahead. Kittens should be tested for viral diseases such as Feline Leukemia and FIV. These diseases can be transmitted to other cats in the household. Both puppies and kittens should be started on dewormers, and have their stool checked for parasites. Even if they were given dewormers in their previous home it is common for them to get reinfected with parasites. If your pet came from a Humane Society or rescue where they were around a lot of other pets, a week period is ideal before meeting your current pets. This will allow time to make sure they do not develop a respiratory infection that can be transferred to other pets in the household.

Your veterinarian will develop a health plan that is best for your pet, which will include vaccinations, dewormers, and preventative products for flea & tick and heartworm disease, along with feeding guidelines. Visits to your veterinarian are usually every 3-4 weeks, and consist of 2-4 appointments, depending on the age of your pet. If your pet is not already spayed or neutered, this procedure is typically scheduled around 6 months of age.

Behavioral Health

Just as important as medical health, is behavioral health. Your veterinarian will discuss handling, and how to get your pet used to basic care tasks such as nail trimming and teeth brushing. Part of behavioral health is learning how to interact with other dogs. Puppies should be enrolled in daycare, training or have other opportunities to interact with other dogs (such as Dogs & Donuts at ZimmVet on Saturdays). If you have other pets in the household, this is not enough. Playing only with pets in your household is similar to a child knowing how to behave and play with their brother or sister, but not other children once they go to kindergarten.

Enrolling in training class around 8 weeks of age, or as soon as possible, will give your new puppy a good foundation to being a good canine citizen for the rest of their life. Not only is the training designed to help the pet, but it is also teaches the pet parents how to properly communicate with their puppy. The more you practice the skills learned in class the better your pet will learn. These skills are used throughout your pet's lifetime, and are not forgotten. An example is a basic command of "drop it." If your pet snags something potentially toxic like a bag of candy, this command can save your pet's life and save you the cost of treating a toxicity.

Your veterinarian and trainer can help you through many of the common puppy problems such as jumping, biting, bathroom training, kennel training and others. It is also nice to interact with other pet owners, and know that you are not alone, if you are struggling with puppy problems.

Disclaimer: This written content is meant to be educational and is not medical advice. Always consult a veterinarian about medical advice for your pet.